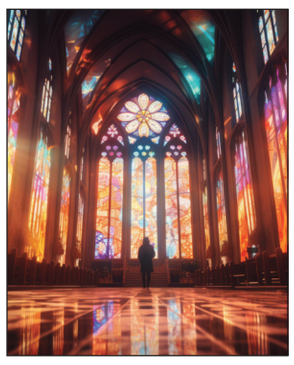
Faith & Inspiration

Unfortunate Infatuation



By Vincent V. Marshburn

Humanity has struggled with the notion of love since our inception.

We have sought to identify and define it in so many ways outside of a foundation based on relationship with God. This is rather regrettable, since God himself is the complete embodiment of love (1 John 4:8, 16).

God generously provided for his creation by forming a perfectly balanced world in which all the physical and spiritual elements were harmoniously aligned originally. This manner of provision is further evidence of his great encompassing love. Some would also argue that the fact God allowed the pinnacle of his creation, human beings, to exercise free will in choosing to reciprocate his love or not also proves the height and breadth of divine love. The supreme God of everything was willing to be vulnerable, to entrust others with the heart of his being, and to thereby risk rejection.

The greatest work of God's love culminates in the ultimate act of redemption: Jesus's sacrifice on our behalf. One of the most famous verses in the Bible (John 3:16) summarizes it quite succinctly and effectively: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son …." The Greek language of the New Testament reserves a specific word to indicate this absolutely unselfish and incomparably compassionate love: "agape" (ah-gah-pay). This is the love that is the basis for the Gospel and which we are exhorted to extend to others.

On the other hand, humankind has exhibited an imperfect and faltering understanding of love ever since our interrupted inhabitation in Eden. Our corporeal and carnal efforts tend to be rooted in selfish desires and indulgence rather than completely wholesome concern and consideration. Through the course of history, we have often resorted to treating people and relationships as transitory, expendable, superfluous or inconvenient. At the same time, we seem to continually seek genuine and meaningful connection and companionship with sources outside ourselves.

The Bible contains numerous examples of individuals, tribes and nations that manifested misdirection of love away from the one and only God toward impotent and ineffectual items of dispassionate substance. From an aspiring tower (Genesis 11:1–9) to a golden calf (Exodus 32) to entire pantheons of primal mythical deities, we have focused our impulses and urges toward unfulfilling objects of affection and devotion. We make idols of things, of others and even of the idea of love itself, or at least our inadequate perception of it.

Along the way, the meaning and intent of love has become misconstrued, misrepresented and obscured. We fixate on superficial or sentimental aspects such as ostentatious displays of romance or materialistic attraction, often at the expense or exclusion of deep, serious, mutually supportive relationships. Our society and culture have even managed to distort and subvert the underlying significance and value of physical and emotional intimacy, often propagating relationships that are shallow, abusive or generally unhealthy.

In our modern era, artificial intelligence (AI) has become, for some, an intellectual and psychological obsession. Tales of "infatuation" or excessive dependency directed toward AI abound, and the anticipation of artificial partners further reinforces failures to sustain substantial associations among fellow human beings. While I personally tend to be quite introverted myself and often eschew social scenarios, even I recognize the importance of cultivating relationships with real people.

However, some are seeking affinity and even intimacy with something that is inherently incapable of substituting for real human bonding and caring.

In an episode of the television series "Star Trek: The Next Generation," the 25th-century starship USS Enterprise faces a tremendous challenge as it encounters a kind of "booby trap" in space. The ship inadvertently triggers an ancient device that emits dangerous radiation, which drains the Enterprise's power systems, rendering it immobile.

Chief engineer Lieutenant Geordi La Forge, desperate for a solution, utilizes the ship's holographic technology to construct a facsimile of the original facility where the Enterprise's warp engines were designed. The computer system interprets Geordi's request very literally and also produces a replica of the original engineer who designed the engines, Dr. Leah Brahms.

As Geordi proceeds to interact with the Dr. Brahms hologram, he finds himself strangely attracted to the virtual persona imparted to the simulated woman. Despite his initial misgivings, he cannot help but be drawn to her incredible intelligence, demanding and argumentative character, and charming enthusiasm regarding the subject of warp engine functions.

After conducting several tests and simulations, Dr. Brahms concludes that there might be a maneuver that could allow the ship to escape the influence of the radiation field, but it would require the computer to be in full control of the ship. Further tests indicate that there is only a small probability that the computer timing will be sufficient to perform the maneuver successfully, barring any potentially unpredictable variables.

Upon analysis, Geordi realizes that part of the solution lies in not relying exclusively on machine logic, but rather taking into account human intuition. He comes to understand that his infatuation with the AI-generated likeness of Dr. Brahms has strongly influenced his dependence on it for answers.

Together with the bridge crew, Geordi works out a plan that leverages a non-obvious approach, relying more on subtlety and measured adjustments rather than brute force.

In the end, Geordi thanks the computer-synthesized Dr. Brahms for her or its assistance and expresses his somewhat matured perspective on technology.

GEORDI: You know, I've always thought that technology could solve almost any problem. It enhances the quality of our lives. Lets us travel across the galaxy. Even gave me my vision. But sometimes you have to turn it all off. …

DR. BRAHMS: We made a good team.

GEORDI: Maybe we can do it again some time.

As with Geordi, we will typically find that opportunities to interact and collaborate with real people will be far more productive and rewarding than merely relying on the purported efficiency of machines. Any perceived affections or sentiments we may experience toward such instruments of enumeration and calculation are no substitute for the real bonds of amity and kinship we establish among ourselves.

The nature of the Body of Christ is such that we as individuals ideally depend on the collective quality of the Church to edify and enrich our mutual experience as believers (1 Corinthians 12:12–27). Rather than suffer from unfortunate infatuation that fosters unrealistic expectations about ourselves, others and even our own creations, we should strive to develop and demonstrate true love that transcends our flawed awareness and ability.

May we be vessels of the love that God manifested in creating and redeeming us and his creation through Jesus.

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Why *Simple Daily Habits* Matter More Than BIG HEALTH RESOLUTIONS

FEATURE IMPACT

Most people don't set out to ignore their health. It usually slips down the list somewhere between the morning alarm and the last email of the day. Breakfast gets rushed or skipped. Exercise is postponed until tomorrow. Sleep is cut short to catch up on everything else. By the end of the week, healthy intentions are still there, but the follow-through feels harder than expected.

For many, the challenge is not motivation but finding habits that fit into real life. Small, repeatable choices around sleep, exercise, nutrition, mental well-being and social connection can support how the body and mind function over time.

Sleep Well

Sleep is essential for physical recovery, mental focus and emotional balance, but it's often the first habit to slip when schedules get busy.

Establishing a regular bedtime routine helps signal when it's time to rest. Limiting screen exposure in the evening, keeping sleep and wake times consistent and creating a dark, quiet sleep environment can support more restorative sleep. Over time, better sleep contributes to improved mood, focus and overall heart health.

Exercise in Manageable Ways

Exercise often falls into the same trap as sleep. When schedules get full, it becomes something to get back to rather than something that fits into the day as it unfolds. A missed workout can quickly turn into a missed week, even for people who value staying active.

Regular movement supports heart health, muscle strength and overall energy, but it doesn't need to be all-or-nothing. Short periods of activity spread throughout the day can still make a difference, especially when long stretches of sitting are the default.

Walking between meetings, stretching in the morning or adding light strength exercises at home are simple ways to stay active without blocking out extra time.

Eat Nutritiously

Food decisions often happen on autopilot as meals are squeezed into busy schedules and long days, making nutrition one of the most influential daily habits.

Meals do more than provide fuel. When built around nutrient-rich foods, they support muscle health, brain health and heart health. An overall healthy eating pattern includes a variety of whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins, helping the body keep up with everyday demands.

Protein plays an important role in maintaining muscle and supporting daily movement, especially as people age. High-quality protein from foods, along with a balanced diet and regular exercise, can help support all the muscles in the body. Choosing protein sources that are easy to prepare and repeat supports consistency when schedules are full.

As part of a balanced approach to healthy habits, nutrition guidance from the American Heart Association's Healthy for Good initiative, nationally sponsored by the Egg Nutrition Center, highlights how everyday food choices can support the body and brain over time. Eggs are an example of a high-quality protein and they fit easily into meals throughout the day.

Eggs also deliver choline, a nutrient many Americans don't get enough of. Choline is a critical nutrient, among others, for supporting brain development, memory and mood. Along with protein, choline helps support brain health, making it an important consideration across life stages.

According to the American Heart Association, healthy people can include one egg daily, up to seven eggs per week, as part of a heart-healthy diet. For healthy older adults with normal cholesterol, two eggs per day can be included as part of a heart-healthy dietary pattern.

Mind Your Mental Well-Being

The way people eat, sleep and move does not just affect the body. It also shapes how the brain responds to stress and daily demands. When routines feel rushed or inconsistent, mental well-being is often one of the first areas to feel the strain.

Ongoing stress can interfere with focus, sleep and eating habits, making it harder to maintain healthy routines. Simple practices like deep breathing, mindfulness or stepping away from screens for a few minutes can help reduce tension and restore attention.

Making time for rest and reflection, and setting realistic expectations, can also support emotional balance. What supports the brain often supports the heart as well, reinforcing the value of caring for mental and physical health together.

Socialize and Stay Connected

Mental well-being is shaped by both daily routines and relationships. When life feels busy or stressful, social connection is often the first thing to get pushed aside, even though it plays an important role in emotional health.

Staying connected doesn't require packed calendars or constant interaction. Shared meals, short conversations or a quick check-in with a friend or family member can help maintain a sense of connection.

Build Habits That Fit Real Life

Healthy routines are more likely to last when they fit into the rhythm of everyday life rather than compete with it. Big changes can feel motivating at first, but it is often the small, repeatable choices that quietly shape how people feel over time.

Choosing foods that are easy to prepare, finding enjoyable ways to exercise and protecting time for sleep can make healthy habits feel more realistic. When routines are built around what is already happening during a typical day, they are easier to return to even when schedules get busy.

For more information and educational resources on nutrition and healthy living, visit Heart.org.

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